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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 /093 W
----------077057 040802Z /10
R 031350Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1469
INFO AMEMBASSY COTONOU
AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USMISSION GENEVA
USICA WASHDC
TURALS/AMEMBASSY LAGOS 2777

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 2119

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, GB, DM
SUBJECT: BENIN SITUATION

REF: LIBREVILLE 2107 AND PREVIOUS

1. GENERAL ATMOSPHERE FOLLOWING INITIAL DEPARTURE OF BENINESE HAS BECOME MORE RELAXED, AT LEAST FOR TIME BEING. CAMP AT LYCEE D'ESTUAIRE NO LONGER HAS FENCE FRONTING ON AIRPORT ROAD, ARMORED VEHICLES HAVE DISAPPEARED, AND MILITARY GUARD THERE HAS CONSIDERABLY DIMINISHED IN NUMBER AND STATE OF ALERT. TRAFFIC IS FLOWING FREELY PAST LYCEE. LACK OF FENCE AND GENERAL INATTENTIVENESS OF GUARDS GIVES WEIGHT TO GABONESE CONTENTION OVER PAST TWO OR THREE DAYS THAT BENINESE IN CAMP ARE NOT RESTRICTED
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(LIBREVILLE DAILY L'UNION MORNING AUG 3 REPORTED THAT "HEADS OF FAMILIES ARE CIRCULATING FREELY AND OFTEN GO TO BUY FOOD IN CITY TO COMPLEMENT BREAD, RICE AND CONSERVES DISTRIBUTED BY GABONESE AUTHORITIES").

2. SAME ARTICLE REPORTED THAT GOG, "CONSCIOUS OF MULTIPLE IMPACT ON NATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF REPATRIATION OF BENINESE,"

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HAD OPENED "VAST CAMPAIGN OF EXPLANATION" (FONMIN'S MEETING
WITH DIPLOMATIC COMS WAS BRIEFLY MENTIONED, BUT WE ARE PROMISED
FULL TEXT TOMORROW). SPECIAL COMMISSION CREATED JULY 31 UNDER
LEADERSHIP OF PRIME MINISTER HAS BEEN DIVIDED INTO FIVE SUB-
COMMITTEES TO (A) CARRY OUT CENSUS OF BENINESE, (B) DETERMINE
APPROXIMATE
VALUE OF REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY OF THOUSANDS OF BENINESE,
(C) STUDY TRANSPORT OF THOSE BEING REPATRIATED (ARTICLE
SPECULATES THAT AIR AFRIQUE FLIGHT TO LAGOS AUG 3 WILL TRANSPORT
ADDITIONAL BENINESE AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE), (D) ASSURE MAINTENANCE
OF REFUGEES AT LYCEE, AND (E) DETERMINE (AMOUNT OF?) PANIC SALES
OF CARS, FURNITURE, UTENSILS, ETS. TO PROFIT OF OTHER INHABITANTS.
FINALLY, ARTICLE STATED THAT DISTURBANCES IN COMMERCIAL "CIRCUITS"
CAUSED BY DEPARTURE OF BENINESE WAS STUDIED LAST WEEK BY GOG.
WHOLESALERS HAVE FIRNISHED FIGURES AND NOW GOG MUST DETERMINE
HOW TO RESOLVE PROBLEM.

3. IN SEPARATE ARTICLE, MINISTER OF EDUCATION WAS REPORTED
AS MEETING AUG 2 WITH APPROX 200 BENINESE TEACHERS WHO ARE NOW
EXEMPT FROM REPATRIATION. MAIN PURPOSE OF MEETING WAS CLEARLY TO
REASSURE TEACHERS THAT IF THEY STAY, THEY AND FAMILIES WILL BE
SAFE.

4. COMMENT: WHILE SITUATION IS NOW MORE RELAXED, BASIC PROBLEM
OF WHAT TO DO WITH THOSE STILL AT LYCEE REMAINS, AND WILL PROBABLY
BOT BE HELPED WHEN WORD OF RECEPTION BEING ACCORDED BENINESE IN
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COTONOU (COTONOU 1091) FILTERS BACK. WE MAY THEN SEE INCREASE
IN REQUESTS FOR DOCUMENTATION AS POLITICAL REFUGEES, WITH CON-
CURRENT INCREASED PRESSURE ON GABONESE TO GUARANTEE SAFTY OF
THOSE WHO REMAIN. DEPARTURE OF SECOND FRENCH SHIL
WILL HELP FURTHER RELIEVE TENSION, BUT UNLESS SOME RHYTHM IS
MAINTAINED, TENSION COULD WELL RETURN. MEANWHILE, GOG IS CERTAINLY GO
ING
OUT OF ITS WAY TO CREATE IMPRESSION THAT ONCE ORIGINAL DECISION
TO REPATRIATE WAS TAKEN AFTER GOG'S HAND WAS FORCED AS RESULT
OF MOB ACTION, THEY HAVE BEEN MOST SOLICITOUS OF WELFARE OF THOSE
AFFECTED, AND INDEED THERE SEEMS BE CONSIDERABLE TRUTH IN THEIR
ASSERTIONS. WE HAVE HEARD OF NO HORROR STORIES FROM CAMP SUCH AS
MIGHT BE EXPECTED IN CIRCUMSTANCES--FOOD, SANITATION, ETC.,
PEOPLE APPARENTLY DO COME AND GO, WE KNOW OF NO FURTHER CASES
OF HARASSMENT OF THOSE BENINESE WTILL REMAININT IN CITY,
AND INCIDENTS OF LAST WEEK HAVE DIED DOWN. SITUATION, IN
BRIEF, GIVES APPEARANCE OF BEING UNDER CONTROL, AT LEAST FOR NOW.
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